



WIC Breastfeeding Statistics

- In 1996, an average of 292,273 breastfeeding women – 36 percent of all postpartum WIC mothers — participated in the WIC Program each month.
- In a 1995 survey by Ross Laboratories, 46.6 percent of WIC infants were breastfed in the hospital and 12.7 percent were still being breastfed at 5 to 6 months of age.
- Breastfeeding rates are growing faster among WIC participants than among the rest of the population: The Ross laboratories survey showed that between 1989 and 1995, the percentage of WIC mothers breastfeeding in the hospital increased by more than 36 percent while the percentage for non-WIC mothers breastfeeding in hospital increased 12.9 percent.
- Duration of breastfeeding among WIC participants is also increasing: the percentage of WIC infants breastfeeding at 6 months of age increased by 51.2 percent between 1989 and 1995. During the same period, the percent of non-WIC infants breastfeeding at 6 months increased 22.7 percent

Benefits of Breastfeeding

For babies, breast milk:

- Is an ideal food
- Provides all needed nutrients for the first 4-6 months of life
- Helps reduce colic, spitting up, and diarrhea
- Protects against illnesses and allergies
- Provides babies with their mothers' immunity to disease
- Helps guard against chronic disease
- May increase cognitive development

For mothers, breastfeeding:

- Enhances confidence and self esteem
- Helps the uterus return to shape faster
- May reduce the risk of breast cancer
- Helps weight loss occur more rapidly after pregnancy
- Provides breast milk that is always warm, ready to use, and economical
- May delay the return of menstrual periods

For the breastfeeding mom and baby, breastfeeding:

- Enhances mother-infant bonding
- Is environmentally friendly and saves energy
- Is easy and convenient, once established
- Works best when dad, family, friends, and the community offer support